

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T DAMASCUS 3083

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS 1, 2
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, XF, SY, LE, IS, UNSC
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: SYRIAN ROLE

REF: A) STATE 123903, B) DAMASCUS 2953

1. FONMIN KHADDAM SUMMONED ME MAY 28 TO RECEIVE SYRIAN
REPLY TO OUR MESSAGE (REF A) DELIVERED MAY 23. WITH REGARD
TO OUR FIRST POINT ABOUT THE POSITION OF THE PLO AND YASSER
ARAFAT TOWARD UNIFIL OPERATIONS. KHADDAM SAID SYRIA HAD BEEN
CONTINUOUSLY URGING ITS PALESTINIAN BROTHERS TO IMPLEMENT
UNSC RES 425 AND TO FACILITATE RESTORATION OF LEBANESE
SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE SOUTH. FEELING POSITIVE PALESTINIAN
ATTITUDE, SYRIA HAD HELPED ARRANGE THE MEETING BETWEEN
ARAFAT AND LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER HOSS LEADING TO THEIR
AGREEMENT ON MEASURES TO BE TAKEN. THE PLO HAD ISSUED A
STATEMENT WHICH HAD BEEN POSITIVELY RECEIVED BY VARIOUS
PARTIES IN LEBANON, AND THIS HAD BEEN REFLECTED IN THE
LEBANESE PRESS.

2. WITH REGARD TO THE POSSIBLE MOVEMENT OF SYRIAN ADF
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FORCES SOUTHWARD TO THE LITANI, KHADDAM SAID, "AT ONE
STAGE WE HAD WANTED THIS BUT ISRAEL REJECTED IT AND THE
U.S. GOVERNMENT SEEMED SYMPATHETIC TO ISRAEL EVEN THOUGH
PROBLEMS WERE ABOUT TO OCCUR. THERE ARE NOW NEW CIR-
CUMSTANCES AND IF IT IS DEEMED THAT WE CAN HELP THE
LEBANESE STATE IN EXTENDING ITS SECURITY TO A TOWN LIKE
NABATIYEH, THEN WE MIGHT DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT WITH THE

LEBANESE GOVERNMENT."

3. WHEN I ASKED KHADDAM WHETHER HIS STATEMENT MIGHT APPLY TO THE ARQUB AND OTHER AREAS NEAR NABATIYAH, HE REPLIED FLATLY, "NO."

4. KHADDAM REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT ON WHAT PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE HAD AGREED TO REGARDING PALESTINIAN ARMED PRESENCE IN THE SOUTH, STATING SYRIA HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETING BUT HE WAS SURE PM HOSS HAD THE COMPLETE PICTURE.

5. WITH REGARD TO THE PROBLEM OF HADDAD AND CHIDIAK IN THE SOUTH, KHADDAM SAID THIS WAS A LEBANESE GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY. IN SYRIA'S VIEW, HOWEVER, THEY WERE COLLABORATORS WITH ISRAEL AND HAD ACTED AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF THEIR COUNTRY. THEY WERE NOT A LEGITIMATE FORCE IN THE SOUTH AND THE LEBANESE PEOPLE WOULD NOT ACCEPT THAT THEY UNDERTAKE ANY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEBANESE STATE. INTEGRATING THEM INTO THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD BE NO SOLUTION. IF SYRIA WERE ASKED TO GIVE HER POINT OF VIEW, 80 PER CENT OF LEBANON'S PEOPLE REGARDED THEM AS ENEMIES OF LEBANON. KHADDAM CAUTIONED USG AGAINST ADVISING LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IN THE DIRECTION OF INTEGRATION BECAUSE THIS WOULD ONLY CREATE INTERNAL DIFFERENCES WHICH LEBANON AT THIS
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POINT DID NOT NEED. ALL LEBANESE NOW DEMAND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BALANCED NATIONAL ARMY, KHADDAM SAID. BRINING IN HADDAD AND CHIDIAK AND THEIR FORCES WOULD BE VIEWED AS CAVING IN TO AN ISRAELI CONDITION, AND THIS WOULD PLACE AN INTOLERABLE BURDEN ON THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. IF THE UNITED NATIONS WAS ENCOURAGING MOVEMENT IN THIS DIRECTION, IT WAS DOING SO WITHOUT ANY AUTHORITY WHATSOEVER AND WAS INTERVENING IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE LEBANESE STATE.

6. IN ANSWER TO MY FINAL QUESTION ABOUT STEPS TO BE TAKEN IN LEBANON FOLLOWING ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL, KHADDAM WOULD SAY ONLY THAT PRESIDENTSARKIS WOULD CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS TO REALIZE NATIONAL ACCORD.

7. COMMENT: IN INDICATING THAT SYRIA MIGHT BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER MOVING ITS FORCES SOUTH TO NABATIYEH IF THAT WOULD AID GOL IN REESTABLISHING SECURITY THERE, KHADDAM WAS ALSO SAYING THAT ANY SUCH MOVEMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN SYRIA AND LEBANON. I ASSUME THIS MEANS AT THE SARKIS-ASSAD SUMMIT WHICH THE

BEIRUT PRESS EXPECTS WILL TAKE PLACE NEXT WEDNESDAY.
BELIEVE OUR EXCHANGE WITH THE SYRIANS ON THIS SUBJECT
HAS HELPED LAY FOUNDATION FOR A POSITIVE SYRIAN RESPONSE
WHEN THE LEBANESE RAISE THE SUBJECT. ANOTHER
ASPECT OF THIS EXCHANGE IMPLICIT IN THE STRUCTURE OF
KHADDAM'S RESPONSE IS SYRIA'S UNDERSTANDING THAT ISRAEL
WILL NO LONGER OBJECT TO ADF FORCES MOVING SOUTHWARD
INTO NABATIYEH.
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